

Effects of Promotion Techniques at Higher Education Institutions: The Case of the Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

Promotion as a part of marketing that is known like a heart of organizational well functioning, has a crucial role in achievement of the organization's goals – University's goals. The purpose of this study is to identify the most important promotional and communication strategies and their impact in attracting the prospective students in higher education for the case of the Republic of Macedonia. This study provides descriptive statistics and categorizes the order of importance of the identified marketing strategies. Different promotion techniques have been considered in order to find out their impact in attracting new students. Theoretically, it looks like the need to put changes on marketing and promotion strategies in order to re-organize the market of higher education institutions, appeals as the exact case of business cycles in accordance to the market dynamics and competition. A survey using stratified random sampling was conducted, with 8 universities from different areas in Republic of Macedonia randomly selected for the study. The approach was taken a quantitative survey of first semester students registered at public and private universities. Based on the results from of the research, hear-sayings is the main technique affecting the registration of the students followed by direct marketing, university's website, debates & forums and others techniques.

Keywords: promotion techniques, strategic marketing, mass media, higher education, students

JEL classification: I23, M51

Introduction

Taking into consideration the recent changes in the higher education system of reforms, the disloyalty of the private sector education's market, the regional economic crisis and a gamut of factors affecting the students' decision to university level studies, the Universities seeks to raise the quality and communication with all the groups of interest in order to reach a higher ranking position amongst the top universities of the region (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2001). Research Methods in Education.). The higher education market in the Republic of Macedonia is moving towards a new development and redistribution among the private and public universities. More evidence to that make the data of the last academic year 2013/2014 indicating that the market share of public and private universities was 77.09% and 22.91% respectively, while for the next period (2014/2015) the difference is more neat representing the respective data: 85% (public universities) and 15% (private universities). The aim of the paper is to identify and estimate the effect of promotion in the number of students registered in a higher education institution.

Consequently, it is of need to put down the question: what is the effect of promotion through advertisement, direct marketing, public relations and hear sayings in students' registration?

The paper uses relevant literature over promotion in general, its effect n students' registration, and the factors that define the registration process and the conceptual discrepancy of various authors over promotion (Alonderiene, Klimavičiene, 2013). Promotion is a process of communication among the producers and consumers, claiming a positive attitude of buyers for the products and services, which later on will facilitate the selling process (Lane, Whitehill, Russell, 2004). It is considered as a permanent process of communication between sellers and buyers divided in current and potential ones. Promotion includes all the means of the marketing system which duty is to reach the potential communication (Lancaster, Withey, 2007; Lauterborn, 1990).). Promotion is defined as an interweaving of various activities within each the corporate communicates with individuals, groups or the whole society in terms of personal/not personal requests in order to harmonize their interests and willing. Promotion is efficient only if other marketing activities (product, price, distribution), accomplish efficiently their duties (Kotler, Keller, 2012). If the contrary happens and the marketing system is defined by high prices and not efficient delivering, then promotion will no longer facilitate the customers' approach to what the corporate offers (Cochran, 2003; Emrey, 2001). Decision-making in general is estimated as a problem's solution process undertaken by the potential applicants during university's selection process. Decision-making models have been developed around what is defined as consumer's purchase behaviour. This last one, is constructed in series involving the need of self-information, information source, alternative's evaluation, purchase decision and utility after the purchase is done.

Methodology

After reviewing the literature regarding marketing, promotions strategies in Academic Institutions and the influence of promotions strategies in enrolment growth we summarized and developed the main hypothesis that show us the importance of promotions techniques in enrolment growth. In this study a questionnaire form was designed to measure influence of promotion strategies on the student choice for selecting university. The questionnaire is structured in three main columns namely: the first column contains questions for collecting data on surveyors general. The second group of questions helps in collecting data about the fact that promotion technique which mostly affects the decision on the selection of university students concerned. And in the last column the respondents will need to meet multiple choices, determined according to a Likert scale. The population sampling of the research includes all the students of the first semester of studied at eight (4 private and 4 public) Universities in the Macedonia in all the faculties. There were surveyed in total 1175 students using an well structured questionnaire where the first part collects general data and the second part is addressed to the independent variables (the impact of promotion, universities choice factors' and students' utility after choosing the universities). Before collecting the data used for analysis the questionnaire was initially tested and then conducted. The data collection process took roughly two months. After being collected, the data were coded, filtered and then analyzed through the use of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Results

The importance of this research paper is that the data are qualitative and their results bring us in crucial recommendation for the University Future. In the whole sample that was 1175 students from first semester, 53% are male and 47% are female. Regarding the ethnic structure of the population in Macedonia in research have been involved people of different ethnic backgrounds, even the Albanians, Macedonians, Turks, Roma and Serbs.

As we can see from the figure 1, according to the research, hear-sayings (73.6%) is considered to be the most powerful technique that has impact on student's choice, followed by direct marketing (59.6%), university's website (57.6%), public relation (57%) and others techniques. Direct marketing and public relations are positive which means that they both have a positive impact on students' registration. We cannot tell the same about either the hear-saying or the advertisement. Only 13,3% of current students have read the article in the newspaper for the University in which they are designated to study and only 4.8% of the total number of students surveyed stated that they have read brochures of the institutions. This generally can be described as lack of practice of students in the region to read newspapers, and their orientation towards audio-visual media.

Figure 1

Percent of the promotion techniques in student decision-making



Source: PhD dissertation, 2015; Teuta Veseli-Kurtishi

Limitations

As all research paper and my research paper has its own limitation. The first and the concern their wishes the paper will be more complete and results and recommendations also. Another limitation is that I do not put social Medias as promotion factor and to establish their impact in enrolment growth. In the near future I hope we can add these variables in the sample.

Conclusion

Taking all the analysis into account, it is crucial for the Higher Education Institutions to apply efficient promotion's strategies and means in order to be more competitive in the higher education market and to increase the role of universities in the society's development. The statistical results show that the top factors of promotion that

strongly affect the students' registration are the public relations and the direct marketing. Based on that, Universities must shed more light on the financial means that might raise the investments on both factors. As a consequence, the prospective way of thinking leads to conclusions that only via investments the university can be more attractive to fresh and potential students and this is the only way to ensure financial sustainability.

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